

Veterinary clinic warns of rabies virus, urges caution



Cpl. Jennifer Brofer
Chubbs, a 4-year-old American Pittbull Terrier, gets a checkup at the Depot Veterinary Clinic Nov. 14 with his owner. Having annual checkups and making sure a pet's shots are updated annually will help protect against deadly diseases like the rabies virus.

CPL. JENNIFER BROFER
STAFF WRITER

Most Depot residents have probably seen a cat or two scurrying around, but do not stop to think about the dangers these seemingly harmless strays can bring.

In 2001, there were 143 cases of rabies reported in animals in South Carolina, according to the Center for Disease Control. In light of the possibility of spreading to Parris Island, the Depot Veterinary Clinic issued a warning to Depot residents urging them to be especially cautious when dealing with stray animals and recommends that pet owners update their pet's immunizations annually.

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system and is spread by the bite or scratch of an infected animal. It is carried in mammals such as cats, dogs, cattle, foxes, raccoons, coyotes and bats, and once the disease infects the nervous system, it is always fatal.

Even though there have not been any confirmed cases of rabies in animals on Parris Island in more than a year, Army Capt. Michelle Goodnight, Depot Veterinarian, said it is still important to have your pets shots updated annually to prevent infection.

"Rabies is a fatal disease – if it is not treated before it hits your nervous system, you will die," said Goodnight. "I would rather err on the side of caution than to not treat someone and have them end up dead."

An animal that is infected



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-Army Capt. Michelle Goodnight, Depot Veterinarian

with rabies might not even show the symptoms of a rabid animal, said Goodnight.

There are two types of rabies – the “furious” form and the “dumb” form, she said. The furious form is when the animal acts “mad” and randomly attacks people. The “dumb” form is where they appear uncoordinated or tame and will even let you walk up to them.

“Animals can actually shed the virus through saliva and transmit the disease before they even show any symptoms,” said Goodnight.

Even if domestic pets have current immunizations, there is still a risk of infection.

“Even vaccinated animals can contract rabies,” she said.

If a resident ever does get bitten, Goodnight recommends they wash the wound thoroughly with lots of soap and water. Also, try and trap the animal, if possible, but do not pick it up. Afterward, they should contact their physician and fill out a bite report to help locate the animal that bit or scratched them, to test the animal for rabies.

“A lot of people don’t realize

how important the bite reports are, she said. “Even if you know that the animal that bit you has been vaccinated, you should still fill out a report.”

In this century, the number of human deaths in the U.S. attributed to rabies has declined from 100 or more each year to an average of one or two each year, thanks to immunizations and programs aimed at eliminating stray animals. However, Goodnight estimated that the number of rabies cases that are reported is only a quarter to half of the actual cases out there.

Goodnight suggests if someone sees a stray animal wandering around without an identification tag, he report the animal to the appropriate authorities.

“Don’t approach animals you don’t know,” said Goodnight. “If you see a stray animal, call the Provost Marshal’s Office.”

Rabies immunizations cost \$10 at the clinic, and appointments can be scheduled up to one month in advance by calling 228-3317.

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Lance Cpl. Brian Kester
Recruit Chris McLaughlin, Platoon 2000, Hotel Co., 2nd RTBn., snaps in during grass week. McLaughlin, a native of Jasper, Tenn., is scheduled to graduate Dec. 30. Marine Corps recruits undergo two weeks of marksmanship training in order to become riflemen.

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